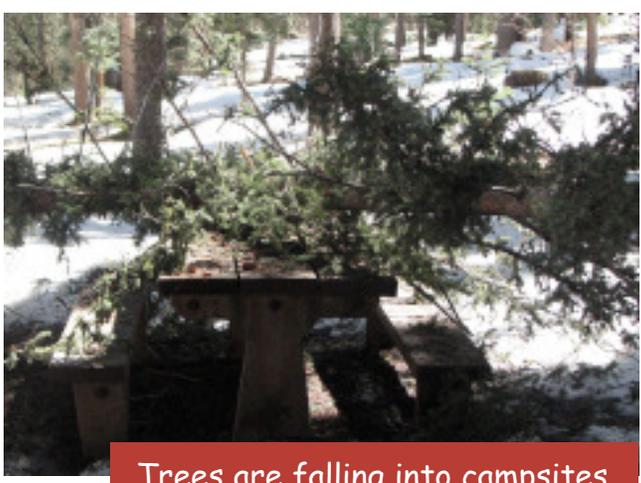


## Williams Creek Campground Status - 2013 Season -

After working to remove unhealthy trees from this popular campground last year, the Pagosa Ranger District reports that some campsites may be opened for part of the 2013 season.

Work will continue this year to remove diseased trees, and foresters will examine the health of remaining trees. Estimates are that one-third of the campground may be open by mid summer.



Trees are falling into campsites.

**OPEN USFS CAMPGROUNDS:** Teal, Cimarrona and Palisades Horse campgrounds north of Williams Creek Reservoir, Bridge Campground to the south. **NOTICE:** Camping along Williams Creek Road is prohibited within one-quarter mile of the road, except in two posted sites.

The danger is that trees, which otherwise appear alive and healthy, can fall without warning. The USFS continues to work to remove hundreds of spruce trees in Williams Creek Campground that have been weakened by insects and disease. Work will continue this summer to make the campground safe for occupancy. More details will be available this spring.

**For information, call the Pagosa Ranger District, 970 264-2268.**



Trees that appear live and green can fall without warning.



Roads are blocked by fallen trees.

See page 2 for more information.

## More Information

### BACKGROUND

Over the past decade, the Forest Service has monitored and treated an aggressive outbreak of a tree disease in the Williams Creek Campground. The disease, *Armillaria*, spreads between root systems, resulting in the decay of roots.

Trees (predominantly spruce) that otherwise appear healthy, when affected by *Armillaria*, can fall without warning when enough of their root system has been compromised. This presents a significant potential hazard to visitors. The only effective treatment is removal of affected trees and those immediately adjacent.

Hundreds of trees have been removed to combat the spread of the disease in the campground. Up to 90

percent of the campground's spruce trees are thought to be infected, rendering the majority of the campground unsafe for public use.

Consequently, in 2012 the Forest Service closed the entire facility to allow affected trees to be removed. Foresters are conducting surveys on the health of remaining trees to determine the extent of hazard still present.

Crews will continue to remove weakened trees in the campground this summer. Following these operations, managers are hopeful that, up to one-third of the campground can be reopened; other sections of the campground with denser stands of spruce may be closed longer.

## Questions and Answers

### Why is the campground closed?

Trees that otherwise appear healthy have been falling without warning, a situation which could put campers at great risk of injury and/or property loss. Disease is widespread throughout the campground.

### Where else can I camp?

There are four developed campgrounds in the area and two designated dispersed campsites. Camping outside of developed campgrounds is prohibited within ¼ mile of Williams Creek Road, except in the two posted sites.

### Are other places where people camp affected?

*Armillaria* is common throughout the forest, but only rarely creates such an extensive problem in developed recreation sites.

### What caused the problem?

*Armillaria* is natural in the forest and generally does not require treatment; however, when it occurs in developed campgrounds, treatment is mandatory due to the risk it presents. The only effective treatment is the identification and removal of affected trees.

### How long will the campground be closed?

The Forest Service worked throughout the 2012 season to remove hundreds of affected trees from the campground. That work will continue during the 2013 season. Managers are hopeful they may be able to open up to one-third of the campground by mid summer.

### What is the long-term prognosis?

Other sections of Williams Creek Campground with denser stands of spruce may require several years to effectively treat to be safe for occupancy. Foresters will continue to evaluate the health and structural integrity of the trees left standing to determine their wind-firmness.

### Is there a possibility that other campgrounds will be closed for the same reasons?

*Armillaria* is present in other campgrounds, but to a lesser extent than in Williams. There are no plans to close other campgrounds at this time, but the situation is being closely monitored.

### Will I be safe in other campgrounds?

The Forest Service conducts annual hazard tree surveys in all campgrounds, and suspect trees are removed as necessary. However, camping in forested environs always entails some measure of risk.

### Can I camp outside campgrounds in the area with a tent, vehicle, RV, horses, etc?

Dispersed camping outside of developed campgrounds is prohibited within ¼ mile of Williams Creek Road, except in two designated dispersed sites. Dispersed camping is permitted in most other areas on the District.